United Nations S/PV.7683

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7683rd meeting
Thrusday, 28 April 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Jieyi	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Delattre/Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi/ Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Prystaiko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft/Mr. Meek
	United States of America	Ms. Power/Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Toro-Carnevali

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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16-12001 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; and Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik, who are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Kiev.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: As the conflict in the eastern Ukraine enters its third year, the Security Council is meeting today with both a sense of urgency and hope. The continued failure to fully implement the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements has served to underscore the crucial need to make progress towards a political settlement of the conflict.

Since the Security Council last considered the situation in Ukraine, on 11 December 2015 (see S/PV.7576), some positive developments have been registered. Not least among them was the fact that the ceasefire was largely respected during the last weeks of 2015. A second development was the commitment announced at the beginning of March this year, in the framework of the security working group, on the implementation of additional sectorial agreements on demining in priority areas, as well as the prohibition of military training in proximity to the contact line — all encouraging steps.

The meeting of the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Ukraine on 3 March and the continued investment of time and political capital by all the relevant actors have also been instrumental in efforts to bridge prevailing differences and keep the focus on concrete milestones towards the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Regular meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group and its four working groups — on political affairs and security, humanitarian and economic matters — continue to be central in that regard.

As the Council is well aware, on 14 April the Ukrainian Parliament voted for the appointment of a new Prime Minister, Mr. Volodymyr Groysman. The new Government's commitment to the implementation of the Minsk agreements has been widely welcomed. Such commitment is expected to be converted into further concrete actions.

Those developments are highly valuable in their own right. However, those positive steps forward continue to be heavily undermined to some extent by an overall precarious and unsustainable situation in the conflict area. The total number of conflict-related casualties continues to increase, and now stands at more than 30,700, including more than 9,300 killed and almost to 21,400 injured since the beginning of the conflict, in mid-April 2014. The latest tragic incident, which occurred on 27 April when at least four civilians were killed and at least eight were injured by shelling in the village of Olenivka, near the city of Donetsk, is a stark reminder of the high human cost of the continued conflict.

While some of the recent civilian casualties have been caused by indiscriminate shelling, most are caused by landmines, booby traps and other explosive remnants of war, which continue to represent the biggest threat to civilian life and security, underscoring the urgent need for extensive mine clearance and mine-awareness actions on both sides of the contact line.

We are pleased that Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik are joining us, despite the late hour in Kyiv. We look forward to hearing their assessments of the security situation in eastern Ukraine, and wish to thank the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission for continuing to dutifully carry out its mandate in what is often a challenging and dangerous environment.

The Special Monitoring Mission's role in eastern Ukraine remains instrumental. In order to carry out its

mandate, the Mission must urgently be granted full and unfettered access, including to the border, as stipulated under the Minsk agreements. All efforts to hinder such access should be condemned, and although the restrictions are happening on both sides of the contact line, according to statistics provided by the Special Monitoring Mission, they seem to take place more in rebel-held areas. Efforts to harass, intimidate and especially to perpetrate violence against the Mission must be deplored, and must cease immediately.

Fighting is still being reported daily, with a sustained period of escalation witnessed over recent weeks and months at levels not seen since the intense phase of the conflict in August 2014. The frequent clashes are also coupled with increased presence and use of proscribed heavy weaponry, with more such weapons now being reported outside of storage sites. In addition to these sobering developments, there is a lack of systemic mine action and reportedly high levels of military readiness and preparedness. This precarious situation should not be allowed to persist because it will create fertile ground for a further deterioration of the situation. All parties must immediately cease hostilities and implement in earnest their commitments under the Minsk agreements, as well as those made since then in the Trilateral Contact Group and its Security Working Group.

Clearly, an improvement in the security situation would be crucial to creating an environment conducive to progress in the political sphere. Of note are the ongoing negotiations in Minsk and among Normandy partners related to modalities for holding local elections in rebel-held areas of Donetsk and Luhansk under Ukrainian law and as per international standards. We hope that ensuing political, technical and legal divergences can soon be overcome. All concerned should find common ground and take immediate steps to live up to the commitments they have undertaken on other bedrock political issues, including amnesty and special-status constitutional changes, as well as on exchange of prisoners.

The situation in Ukraine is also grave on the humanitarian front. More than 3 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance, especially those close to the contact line and in areas beyond Government control. The ongoing suspension by the de facto authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces of almost all operations of the United Nations and and international non-governmental organizations since July 2015 is of great concern. Undue bureaucratic impediments deprive hundreds of thousands of people access to urgently needed essential services, supplies and other protection activities.

This is further compounded by the decision of the Ukrainian Government to suspend social payments, including pensions, to an estimated 600,000 displaced people, pending verification of their status. While the legitimate right of the Government to combat fraud is understandable, it is important to put in place a transparent system that provides clear information about the criteria for any cancellation of benefits and proper communication to those concerned. It is also important that the freedom of movement of civilians be ensured and that they have sustained and safe access across the contact line. As a result of the recent closure of and failure to open new checkpoints, many civilians continue to queue for hours, often at night, in unsafe locations just to access basic services or to visit families and properties.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, through its monitoring mission in Ukraine, continues to monitor and report on the situation of human rights throughout the country and to make recommendations to all parties to the conflict. There are a number of pressing human rights concerns. The question of missing persons and the need to create a mechanism by which all parties to the conflict exchange information and cooperate to establish the whereabouts of those who have gone missing in the conflict zone remains critical. In Crimea, isolation from mainland Ukraine continues to grow, with deepening concerns for the human rights situation in the peninsula. The recent decision to ban the activities of the Mejlis, the representative body of the Crimean Tatars, are of particular concern.

On a positive note, on 29 December 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine published a national human rights action plan. This is a welcome step, as the document is a road map for addressing systemic human rights challenges and conflict-related matters, and envisages a list of actions to be taken by different State institutions pursuant to the national human rights strategy. It is of paramount importance that the plan be implemented. However, nearly four months after its adoption, not all activities envisaged during that period have been implemented.

The Secretariat continues to cooperate closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and remains ready to support, as requested and deemed helpful, the complex and challenging mandate entrusted to OSCE in Ukraine. We commend the vital contributions of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, the Trilateral Contact Group and its four working groups, and the Normandy four leaders, as well as other diplomatic partners, for their efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

In coordination with local and regional organizations, the United Nations also continues to carry out critical and effective work in the humanitarian, human rights, reconstruction and reconciliation spheres, aimed at responding to the urgent and longer-term needs of the affected population in Ukraine. Ultimately, however, progress in the peace process will depend on the political will of the parties and on their readiness and willingness to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict through tangible deeds, both on the ground and at the negotiating table. The United Nations remains committed to supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict in a manner that fully upholds the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Apakan.

Mr. Apakan: I wish to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address the Security Council regarding the situation in Ukraine.

Violence in eastern Ukraine is once again reaching a peak. The fighting around some hotspots varies in intensity over time. Days of relative calm are followed by periods of intense escalation. Just recently, from 11 to 17 April, the Mission has observed particularly intense violence between Avdiivka and Yasnuvata, to the north of Donetsk. This was the highest level of violence observed since August 2015. Armed violence also continues to take place around the cities of Zaitseve, Horlivka, Svitlodarsk and Debeltseve. An upsruge in ceasefire violations has also taken place in the south of Donetsk region and in Luhansk region. Heavy weapons are in frequent use.

The Special Monitoring Mission is also finding an increasing number of weapons missing from permanent storage sites and from known weapon-holding areas. Many of those facilities are completely abandoned. Our observations suggest that many of those weapons are in use at the contact line.

There are about 700 civilians living in and around the contact line. They are suffering. In that context, I should also underline the recent tragedy that took place in Olenivka. That is the reason we need the cessation of hostilities and a full and sustainable ceasefire, for the settlement of the problem as well as to lessen the suffering of the people.

Direct attacks against the Special Monitoring Mission and its assets happen with impunity for the perpetrators. Serious security incidents have taken place recently. Therefore, we have temporarily imposed some restrictions on our patrolling. Impunity for people who threaten or violenty mistreat the Special Monitoring Mission, or who violate its freedom of movement, must end.

The inaction of those who have committed to the ceasefire to withdraw weapons and to protect the Special Monitoring Mission presents a direct challenge to the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements. It undermines efforts made towards stabilization and normalization and endangers their further implementation. The Joint Centre for Control and Coordination (JCCC) could be instrumental in addressing those challenges. However, the Mission's monitoring shows that the JCCC still has not significantly increased its effectiveness.

The Special Monitoring Mission has been adapting its operations to the chaning situation and has further expanded its presence on both sides of the contact line. We have increased the number of locations from where we conduct our monitoring, and have increased our efforts to monitor the border areas not under the control of the Government. The Special Monitoring Mission is now operating out of 13 bases, on both sides of the contact line. More bases are needed, including in non-Government-controlled areas. The Special Monitoring Mission is ready to engage, but needs reassurances on safety and security from those in effective contol in the respective locations. Currently, the Mission has 700 monitors from 47 countries, with the aim of further expansion. Such expansion in number and geographical reach is accompanied by an expansion in technical capabilities, including unarmed aerial vehicles, satellite imagery and cameras in certain sensitive areas.

Human suffering as a result of the conflict is increasing. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of the conflict remains one of the main problems. The plight of IDPs serves to underline the urgency for the sides to continue the peace process. Focused work on gender issues has been a priority for the Special Monitoring Mission. In the conflict area, women, older persons and children are suffering. Women throughout the country appear to be quick in self-initiation and demonstrate a resilient attitude towards the challenges in difficult humanitarian situations.

All civilians in the conflict area face great difficulties when attempting to cross the contact line. That disproportionately affects — I repeat — older persons, children and women. During recent months, several of the few official crossing routes have been closed for short or expanded periods. The closure of checkpoints in Luhansk region considerably limits the possibilities for people to reach their places of work, use the services of hospitals and reach family members.

Throughout the country, the Special Monitoring Mission is continuing its cooperative relationship in humanitarian matters with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF to ensure the effective coordination of efforts on the ground.

Armed formations along the contact line are standing too close together, and have recently moved even closer in some locations. That represents a violation of the Minsk agreements and must not continue. Disengagement is a necessity in the current situation. Military formations need to move further apart to stop the cycle of violence. Increased dialogue across the contact line and confidence-building measures can complement initiatives for disengagement.

Allow me to repeat: a sustainable ceasefire is of central importance to the further implementation of the Minsk agreements. In that context, I should say that Ambassador Sajdik, in cooperation with the Special Monitoring Mission, is working on a truce for the festive season and the upcoming Orthodox Easter holiday. We believe that will be an occasion for the sides to show visible and decisive action for tranquillity and a full ceasefire.

Attacks the Special Monitoring Mission must stop. All signatories to the Minsk documents must live up to their commitments to safeguard and ensure the safety and security of the civilian Special Monitoring Mission. And the JCCC needs to act in line with the responsibilities assigned to it. Over the past week, I addressed three letters to the signatories of the Minsk package of measures in that regard. In close cooperation with the Trilateral Contact Group, the Special Monitoring Mission will continue to work towards the stabilization and normalization of Ukraine, on the basis of the principles and commitments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Apakan for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sajdik.

Mr. Sajdik: First of all, I would like to thank China, in its capacity as President, for having invited Ambassador Apakan and me to brief the members of the Security Council about our common efforts for a peaceful solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

On 27 February 2015, my predecessor, Heidi Tagliavini, briefed this body (see S/PV.7395) on the results of the 15 February Minsk summit of the Normandy Four, namely, the Presidents of France, Russia and Ukraine and the German Chancellor. Ms. Tagliavini also briefed the Council on the Minsk agreements. Since then, the Minsk process continued on track with the aim of implementing the agreements by the end of 2015. We did not succeed in living up to that ambitious target, but we have made considerable progress in the four areas covered by the agreements, namely involving, security, political, humanitarian and economic issues. The main achievement of our efforts is that we have succeeded in substantially reducing the number of victims, both military and civilian, especially last autumn with the ceasefire starting on 1 September, the beginning of the school year.

Under the outstanding leadership of Ambassador Apakan, important decisions in the security field were reached, such as on the withdrawal of heavy weapons and on demining. The implementation of those decisions by the sides of the conflict, as we have just heard, unfortunately leaves ample room for improvement.

Ceasefire violations have lately reached alarming numbers, as we also have just heard from Ambassador Apakan. That needs to stop now. Ahead of the upcoming

Orthodox Easter holidays, the sides really need to fully respect the ceasefire. Secure conditions must be created for the people living in proximity to the hostilities as well as for all those who will cross the line of contact during the upcoming holidays.

In the political field, work is being concentrated on the modalities for local elections in the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast and on amnesty. The corresponding laws, which have to be adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament, will directly impact all actors involved. That will of course demand further efforts, but most of all it will demand a willingness by all participants to compromise. The elections will have to be held in a secure environment — a secure environment before and during, but also after the elections. Repeated severe cases of intimidation against the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with no apparent consequences for the perpetrators have cast a shadow on the impartiality of local security forces in the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast, which is a precondition for the holding of elections that correspond to OSCE standards. In the humanitarian and economic spheres, we have achieved some progress in the release and transfer of detainees as well as in the rehabilitation of railway and water-supply systems.

But there is still a long way to go, especially as to unhindered humanitarian access, including in particular for United Nations entities and the International Committee of the Red Cross. One aspect of the Minsk agreements is still waiting for an appropriate answer — the full restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the re-establishment of sovereign control over the Ukrainian side of the State border with the Russian Federation in the Donbas region.

Many issues of Minsk are intertwined. What we therefore need is a package for a sustainable solution to the conflict. I believe the examples I mentioned here show that Minsk works and that further progress is possible, and will be possible with the firm political backing of the Normandy Four and other important actors.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Sajdik for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

I welcome to the Security Council Mr. Vadym Prystaiko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chief of Staff of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Prystaiko (Ukraine): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for responding to our request to convene today's meeting. I would also like to congratulate you, Sir, on your successful presidency of the Security Council this month and to thank for your constructive and effective work. My only regret is that this meeting could not be held on Friday so that my Minister could make it to New York from Beijing, which he is currently visiting, to address the Council.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations and its States Members that took part in the General Assembly meeting held a few days ago (see A/70/PV.92) to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the sad day when the Chernobyl disaster occurred. Our prayers go to the families of those who died or who were otherwise affected by the tragedy in Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and far beyond our borders.

Two days ago, I was at the Chernobyl station and witnessed the signing by the representative of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and our Ministry of Energy, in the presence of the President of Ukraine, of the additional agreement to permit the international community to gather the resources needed to finalize the Chernobyl project. I am happy to report that the new confinement — the biggest moving structure ever built by humankind — is close to completion. In November, it will start rolling over the station, thereby effectively sealing off the remnants of the reactor and preventing further radioactive contamination. Ukrainians are deeply grateful to all donor nations, the five permanent members of the Security Council, the Group of Seven, the European Union, the EBRD, industry and international organizations for bringing efforts and resources together and striving to turn the page on the biggest technological disaster in our history. This is a great achievement, and we do believe that, by such concerted efforts, we will be able to resolve all outstanding issues, regardless of how impossibly complicated they might seem at the moment.

Unfortunately, this is not the only issue that brought me here today. As if the land of Ukraine had not suffered enough already, as Council members know, we have been struggling for more than two years against the

aggression of our neighbour and our formerly brotherly nation, the Russian Federation. As we have heard today from the briefers — and I am grateful to the Secretariat, the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine for familiarizing the Council with the state of affairs on the ground — over 30,000 Ukrainians have fallen victim to the hostilities in Donbas, with approximately 10,000 killed and 21,000 wounded. More than 1.7 million Ukrainians have had to leave their homes and have become internally displaced persons. Every day Ukrainian families lose a son, a father, a husband, a brother. Every day Ukrainian men and women are wounded, often becoming physically and psychologically handicapped for the rest of their lives.

On 23 April, just the other day, four Ukrainian soldiers were killed and five were wounded as a result of shelling by militants. Last night, we witnessed the tragic deaths of three civilians. There were also seven wounded; they were probably caught in cross-fire. That incident will have to be properly investigated. Ukraine has already invited OSCE monitors to the site.

This war is very hybrid in nature, but it is very real in terms of spilled blood. It is claiming victims regardless of their ethnicity or the languages they speak. They are Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, Germans, Poles, Jews; all of us are the victims.

But there is one particular nation whose fate is again at stake — the Crimean Tatars. This indigenous population of the Crimean peninsula is again suffering, as it did 60 years ago, from Moscow's brutal grip. Then it was Stalin, now it is the new Great Leader. People are disappearing. The only representative body — the Mejlis — was banned by occupation forces under the false pretext — one that has become very widespread — that it was engaged in extremist activity.

Incidentally, a couple of days ago, a Russian citizen and resident of Moscow had her time in jail extended for having been so extremist as to have Ukrainian books in her possession. That is a serious crime indeed, given that the detainee is a director of the only official Ukrainian library in Moscow.

But back to Crimean Tatars, whose homes are being raided and whose unique culture and language are being endangered once again. Tatar leaders warn that the ban potentially threatens more than 2,000 members of some 250 central and local Mejlis structures, which are traditionally elected by Crimean Tatars. At any time, they can be accused of conducting extremist activity, prosecuted and re-expelled from Crimea. More than 130 criminal trials against Crimean Tatars have been held, and 21 Crimean Tatar representatives have been kidnapped — 9 are still missing and 3 were recently found dead.

I am calling today on the Security Council to demand that the Russian Federation restore the rights of the Crimean Tatars, ensure that the sham justice meted out by the Crimean courts and Prosecutor's Office be halted, abrogate its decision to ban Mejlis, and, in a broader sense, just get off our lands in Crimea and the east of Ukraine.

I would like to be absolutely clear: I am humbled by the sheer magnitude of the attention given by the Security Council to the Ukrainian issue. As a matter of fact, we do not want the Russian aggression against Ukraine to be transformed into yet another item on the Council's agenda where, despite regular debates, we see no tangible progress towards a settlement. Since taking our seat in the Council, the Ukrainian delegation has demonstrated the utmost restraint in bringing up this subject. But as has already been mentioned by the briefers today, the security situation is not improving, and the Minsk agreements are not being implemented. I am here today to provide the international community with the relevant information on the actual state of affairs on the ground and help to create impetus for a genuine political process aimed at finding a sustainable, peaceful solution to the conflict. Ukraine is convinced that it can be settled only on the basis of the Minsk agreements. I would like to emphasize a couple of the most important points.

Since all sides, including Russia, committed to the ceasefire, after some ups and downs the situation along the line of contact has recently deteriorated, as we have heard. Only this week, between 19 and 26 April, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission reported about 500 cases of ceasefire violations by illegal armed groups, indicating that the intensity of fighting was at a level that had not been seen since August 2014, a time when Russian troops massively invaded Ukrainian territory.

Russia's proxies in Donbas are still presenting major obstacles to the ability of the Special Monitoring Mission to access all the areas under their control and to verify the ceasefire and withdrawal of weapons. I would like to remind the Council that full and safe access for the Monitoring Mission throughout Ukraine,

including along the Ukrainian-Russian State border, and the creation of a security area along that border, were stipulated in the original Minsk agreement of September 2014, something that our Russian colleagues have tended to forget recently. The Special Monitoring Mission reported that 95 per cent of all the freedom-of-movement incidents during this period were instigated by militants. Specifically, on 7 April, a Monitoring Mission vehicle was hit by bullets near Snizhne and Mission observers were threatened at gunpoint in the village of Smile. On 9 April, a Monitoring Mission patrol came under militant fire in Zhovanka. On 18 April, in the city of Donetsk, militants threatened to fire on OSCE monitors and detain them, and that is the least of the problems. On 25 April Mr. Zakharchenko, the leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, publicly threatened to shoot OSCE observers if a police mission were deployed in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

We are extremely concerned about the fact that illegal armed groups have continued to shell Ukrainian armed forces' positions and civilian sites, especially in places located near the agreed areas for demining. Despite such provocations, we are fully committed to completing the demining of all the agreed-on priority areas, and we are grateful to the United Nations demining experts planning to help. On a personal note, I recently saw an 11-year-old boy from the small Ukrainian town of Mariupol, in southern Ukraine, who is currently being treated in a Montreal hospital and taken care of by Canada's Ukrainian community. He was on a walk with his brother and a couple of friends and picked up a strange object that cost him three limbs. He is not just recovering in hospital, he does not know yet that he now has no younger brother.

Another serious matter is the restoration of damaged economic and social infrastructure in order to provide livable conditions for local civilians on both sides of the contact line. The repairs of the damaged facilities, including water pipelines, can be done only after we have ensured that the security situation has genuinely de-escalated and provided personal safety guarantees for the repairer personnel. Along with that, we remain deeply concerned about the continuing exacerbation of the humanitarian situation owing to the unwillingness of the illegal armed groups in Donbas to lift their blockade of the activities of the international humanitarian organizations in the region.

After months of negotiations, there are still 120 Ukrainians being held captive in Donbas whom we cannot get out, regardless of the all-for-all formula that appeared to have been agreed on by everybody. Even the International Committee of the Red Cross has not been allowed to visit them, nor has it been permitted to search for some 800 missing persons. Médecins Sans Frontières has been accused of espionage and banned from the region by the Russian proxies, despite the Russian Federation's promise to put additional pressure on the illegal groups to let that international humanitarian organization into the region. Yesterday, we barely managed to get our Vice-Speaker of Parliament into Minsk; she was leading a working group on humanitarian issues of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk but was banned by Russia for five years, a ban that Belarus supported. And this despite the fact that Belarus offered its capital for peace talks. We are carefully collecting the evidence of these crimes, and we will use it later on. One of these collections makes for very bad reading, with a lot of bad pictures, but our delegation will circulate the information.

There are no signs of positive change in the difficult security front, either. Russia has organized and deployed in Donbas a 34,000-strong hybrid military force consisting of regular Russian troops as well as foreign and local militants. Russian generals and military officers are providing direct command-and-control of that illegal military entity, which is impressively heavily armed. Specifically, as of now the terrorists have at least 470 tanks, 870 armoured combat vehicles, 450 tube artillery systems and 190 multiple launch rocket systems, operated by so-called disgruntled miners. That is more than most NATO members have in their regular armed forces, and yet it was allegedly acquired in local hardware stores. The last time I checked, one could hardly buy a decent knife in a hardware store, let alone multiple launch rocket systems and jet flamethrowers — which, by the way, are not to be found in the stores of the Ukrainian armed forces.

We would greatly appreciate it if the Russian Federation would take the lead and kindly offer to safely store their beloved separatists' deadly toys on Russian territory, verifiable by the OSCE, thereby removing another stumbling block in the way of a long-awaited peace, with the aim of showing real interest in the Minsk process and bringing a lifting of the sanctions closer. I do not want take up too much of the Council's

precious time, so our Permanent Mission will be happy to provide members with the information I have here, which will be made available later.

The Russian proxies are systematically ruining the social and economic infrastructure of Donbas, once Ukraine's industrial powerhouse. They are dismantling entire factories and taking them to Russia. Vast reserves of coal in Donbas are also being stolen and transported to Russia. Ukraine has lost more than 20 per cent of its gross domestic product as a result of the Russian aggression. And that is on top of the economic war that the Russian Federation has effectively waged on us by blocking our exports as well as the transit of goods to Central Asian States and China. All of this, I should remind the Council, is in contravention of the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, signed in 1994, whereby the signatories promised not to exert economic pressure on Ukraine.

We are totally committed to a political settlement. Our experts have been to Minsk more than 30 times in order to clarify how a political resolution can be achieved and how we can rebuild our ruined economy, revive the region and decentralize our political system. I have no time today to discuss those issues, but I would like to touch on one very key point, the elections, which are not only essential to the peace process but are becoming a reality. We have prepared every piece of the necessary legislation and are ready to discuss their modalities, as our leaders agreed on in Minsk.

What we need, in order to kick-start the election process, in accordance with OSCE standards and in conformity with Ukrainian law, as agreed to by our leaders, is a better security situation on the ground. Let us be reasonable. If there is no security, nobody will hold or observe the elections. President Poroshenko recently proposed deploying a police mission in Donbas, which we believe would help to ensure a safe and secure environment in Donbas, particularly in the context of local elections. The status and mandate of the mission, and its umbrella and composition, can be discussed later. We are open to negotiations and will continue to call on the international community, including the United Nations and OSCE member States, to engage constructively in putting the initiative into practice.

In conclusion, I would again like to draw the Council's attention to the issue of human rights. At least 11 Ukrainian citizens have become political prisoners in Russia. They include a member of the Ukrainian Parliament and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Nadiya Savchenko, a Ukrainian film-director and native Crimean-Ukrainian citizens. We approved a sanctions list against individuals who took part in mock trials of Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia, the so-called Savchenko-Sentsov list. We expect that our international partners will join that initiative.

The only thing we are interested in is achieving a lasting, just and fair peaceful solution. That will not be an easy task to accomplish, we know, but anything short of it would be unacceptable to the Ukrainian people, whose best sons and daughters already paid the ultimate price in defending their homeland. We are ready to do our part of the job, but I am afraid that the keys to sustainable de-escalation and a subsequent long-lasting settlement reside in Moscow. It is Moscow that has to produce those keys and open the door to a better, peaceful future without death, hatred or sanctions.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Special Representative in Ukraine of the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine for their briefings. It is important that they were all able to speak today in order to give the Security Council a complete picture of the developments in the situation on the ground on all fronts — political, security, humanitarian and human rights.

For France, a settlement of the crisis in eastern Ukraine remains more vital than ever. Together with Germany, we have continued to work uninterruptedly on mediation within the Normandy format with the aim of achieving a full settlement to the crisis between Ukraine and Russia in accordance with the framework outlined in the Minsk agreements. Our goal continues to be to ensure the restoration of Ukraine's control over all of its internationally recognized territory. That also requires the re-establishment of its authority over Crimea. On that point, our position is consistent with international law and will not change.

Today, we are very concerned about the deteriorating situation on the ground. The increased pace of violations of the ceasefire, which have been observed over several weeks, is accompanied by a human toll that continues to increase, both among the armed fighters and the civilian population. Since the

beginning of April, regrettably, there have been more than 20 deaths and 130 wounded in the Donbas area. That ongoing low-intensity conflict, marked by regular clashes in several localities, is unacceptable. It threatens to undermine the main progress that we had achieved since August, which was the end of large-scale fighting and a decrease in the number of victims. It undermines the credibility of efforts towards ensuring a negotiated settlement. We must therefore do everything to put an end to it. Otherwise, there is a serious risk that we could be heading towards a worsening of the conflict, which would be detrimental to all parties, not just to Ukraine.

As to the substance, the most recent events on the ground serve to further substantiate our conclusion that the Minsk agreements are the sole valid terms of reference for a peaceful, long-term settlement. There is no other solution. We regret, therefore, the fragmentary implementation of those agreements, although they constitute an international commitment in which the provisions must be implemented by all parties. That includes effectively respecting the ceasefire, which is the only possible basis for making progress, as well as implementing other measures provided for under the Minsk agreements, in particular for constitutional reform when it comes to decentralization and a special electoral law for Donbas. Setting out a political horizon is the best way to ensure that the security situation remains stable. Consolidating the security situation and implementing the political dimension of the Minsk agreements are two topics that are at the basis of any lasting settlement, and cannot therefore be decoupled.

Against that disturbing backdrop, we remain more than ever committed, alongside our German partners, to relentlessly pursue our efforts within the Normandy format for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and to do so without delay. The solutions for progress are well known to us all.

In terms of security, it consists of the effective implementation of the mechanisms discussed at the most recent ministerial meeting in the Normandy format, held in Paris on 3 March, for a consolidation of the ceasefire. Besides the withdrawal of heavy weapons, those include strengthening the role of the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination and setting up a mechanism for preventing and resolving incidents. Moreover, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine should also be able to carry out all of its mandate in an unimpeded and free manner. Threats to its operations and the integrity of its staff are unacceptable.

On the political front, the revival of a positive dynamic depends first and foremost on the early adoption of a law on local elections in Donbas, which should be organized within the context of Ukrainian law and according to OSCE standards. Holding those elections can be envisaged only if there is a stable security environment. In our view, that could be maintained by a complementary international presence on the ground under the auspices of the OSCE. We, together with the German presidency of the OSCE, are currently considering that.

In humanitarian and human rights terms, it is vital that humanitarian organizations immediately enjoy full access, including safe and unimpeded to all territories under separatist control. Unfortunately, that is still not the case. We also recall the commitment made in Paris on 3 March by the parties for the release by 30 April of all prisoners and illegally detained individuals, which in our view includes the case of Nadiya Savchenko. We are concerned about the frequent allegations of violations of human rights in Crimea, especially against the Tatars and pro-Ukrainian militants. In that regard, the decision of the Russian courts to include the Mejlis, the representative assembly of the Crimean Tatars, on the list of extremist organizations is a flagrant violation of the freedom of expression, association and assembly. It is also important that the neutral observation and objective monitoring work being carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other human rights organizations can continue unimpeded throughout Ukrainian territory, including in Crimea.

We are now at a decisive moment. We hope that the parties will assume their full responsibilities to allow the full implementation of the provisions of the Minsk agreements. The inauguration of a new Ukrainian Government, which has publicly demonstrated its intention to make progress on this point, is an important step. Following that, we, together with our German partners, have multiplied our high-level contacts with all parties to revive a dynamic of trust. Those contacts continue as we speak. We call upon all members of the Council to support those efforts in order to collectively speak with one voice. We hope that, at last, sufficient progress will be made in the coming days in order to permit the convening of a new Normandy format ministerial meeting as soon as possible.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the Minister for his remarks. I join others in welcoming Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun, Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik back to the Security Council, and I thank them for their sobering briefings today.

As those briefings have told us so clearly, the word ceasefire is losing its meaning in eastern Ukraine. Since the start of 2016, it has been broken thousands of times. Those violations are causing almost daily casualties. Weapons banned under the ceasefire are being put to deadly use on the battlefield. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission personnel, charged with monitoring the ceasefire, are being harassed and threatened, and worse. People are dying, and those in need are going hungry.

To illustrate how empty the word ceasefire has become: just yesterday, tragically, four civilians were killed. And in response to those harrowing deaths in Olenivka, all we have seen is just claim and counter-claim, That is not good enough. All sides have an obligation to uphold the ceasefire. They all have a duty to protect civilians, especially the vulnerable. What we need to see is a real, meaningful commitment to the ceasefire by all sides. That is the only way to stop the killings. That is the only way for the Minsk agreements to succeed. A ceasefire is the bedrock for Minsk. Without it, all the other measures will falter.

All sides have a role to play, but we should be under no illusions as to where the vast majority of responsibility lies. It falls squarely at the door of the Russian-backed separatists. The Special Monitoring Mission has repeatedly made that clear. It is the separatists who are harassing OSCE monitors. It is separatists who risk escalating the febrile situation. And it is the separatists who are receiving troops, equipment and weapons from their Russian allies.

The continued support from the Russian Federation has sustained the instability in eastern Ukraine. Russia's so-called humanitarian convoys cross the border with no regard for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity or independence. They do so without any inspection. We therefore call on Russia to prove that they have nothing to hide and allow international access to those convoys. While Russia's support for the separatists fuelled this crisis, Russia's influence can also bring about a conclusion to the madness. We call on Russia to use its influence for good, to bring the separatists to heel, so that they respect the ceasefire and withdraw banned weapons, so that they allow unhindered access to the Special Monitoring Mission, and so that international humanitarian agencies can finally access all areas of separatist-held territory. It is almost meaningless to discuss any other aspect of Minsk until that has happened.

What we are discussing today — the death, the suffering — these are all the bloody consequence of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea two years ago. That act of aggression went against every treaty, every international commitment, that Russia has ever made. It went against all the rules and norms of international behaviour in the modern world. Our position on that act of aggression will never waiver: Russia must return Crimea to Ukraine. Until it does, it will continue to face the consequences of its illegal actions.

Over the past two years, the human rights situation in Crimea has deteriorated. For minorities and political opponents, life under the de facto authorities is now characterized by arrests, ill treatment, torture and intimidation. The Crimean Tartar community has been particularly affected. The banning of their representative institution this week is just the latest in a series of attacks on their community, their organizations and their way of life.

In the light of the evidence found in United Nations and OSCE human rights reporting, it is perhaps unsurprising that Russia has consistently denied access to international human rights organizations, save for the solitary Council of Europe mission in January. One of the recommendations from that mission, which reported back to the Council of Europe Secretary General this month, called on Russia to open up Crimea to international human rights monitoring mechanisms. We repeat that call today. Russia must grant such access to enable a proper assessment of the situation.

Let me conclude with this final point. Through its actions in Crimea and through its support to the separatists, Russia has brought chaos to Ukraine. In that chaos, thousands of lives have been lost, including those four civilians only yesterday. No matter who fired the shells that killed those poor people, it is clear that, without Russia's actions, they would not have been exposed to the horrific violence that claimed their lives. I therefore end by once again calling on Russia to fulfil its commitments under the Minsk agreements and to

allow Ukraine to regain control of its sovereign territory. That can happen only if there is a stable ceasefire.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Broook Zerihoun, Ambassador Apakan and the Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine, Mr. Martin Sajdick, for their informative briefings. I would also like to thank the Ukrainian delegation for calling this essential meeting. We recognize, as I think all members of the Council do, the critically important work that OSCE teams are carrying out in the field, often at significant personal risk — as illustrated by the recent attacks on OSCE monitors. We also note the great work done by United Nations staff — again at significant personnel risk, as evinced by the detention of a United Nations staff member by Russian-backed separatists since 8 April. That staff member should be released immediately and unconditionally.

The Security Council has not met to discuss the situation in Ukraine since December 2015 (see S/PV.7576) — a long stretch by recent standards. It would not be unreasonable to interpret the absence of meetings as a sign, perhaps, that the implementation of the Minsk agreements is advancing. Yet, as we all know, and as we have heard starkly today, that is, sadly, not the case. Over the past several months, the conflict has worsened. Violence has increased, and the challenges to implementation of the Minsk agreements have only increased. Before delving into those discouraging developments, it is important to remind ourselves of the root cause of this crisis.

What is happening today is the result of Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which began with its occupation of Crimea more than two years ago. That occupation expanded with substantial military on the ground and weapons support for armed separatists in eastern Ukraine. Every negative consequence of the conflict that we see today — every one — can be traced back to that original sin. We must not lose sight of that incontrovertible fact, even as we focus on the issues and the human consequences in the present.

Let me begin with the situation in eastern Ukraine, where violence along the line of contact has reached its highest levels since the 1 September 2015 ceasefire was declared. According to the most recent report by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, from 25 January to 10 April,

> "the [Mission] recorded 11 consecutive weeks in which the number of recorded ceasefire violations was higher than in any other single week since early September 2015."

On 14 April alone — and this is shocking even by Ukraine standards — the Monitoring Mission recorded more than 4,000 ceasefire violations, some 500 of them on a single day, using heavy weapons that are prohibited under the Minsk agreements.

Just yesterday, as others have noted, we were again reminded of the dreadful human toll of this violence, when an explosion killed four civilians and wounded at least eight more along the line of contact. This cycle of escalation must stop. As the fighting has increased, the unarmed international monitors, whose job it is to document ceasefire violations and to try to de-escalate the violence, have found themselves denied access, threatened and, in some instances, even targeted themselves.

The climate, as has been noted by OSCE colleagues, is a climate of impunity. On 7 April, a Monitoring Mission vehicle that was driving deep into Russian-backed separatist-controlled territory some 60 kilometres from the line of contact came under small arms fire. The same day, in separatist-controlled Luhansk, another such vehicle was blocked by Russian-backed separatist forces. When a monitor stepped out of the vehicle to negotiate their passage, a Russian-backed separatist cocked his rifle and pointed it directly at the monitor. Those are not isolated incidents. According to OSCE reports, separatists have been responsible for more than 90 per cent of incidents in which access has been restricted or denied during this month.

That brings us back to a question we have asked many times before in the Council. When Russia and the separatists it backs have denied impartial monitors and investigators access — from the time of the invasion of Crimea to the inspection of the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 crash site — the question is: what do they have to hide? Why are OSCE monitors so scary that one needs to shoot up their car, cock guns at them and impede their movement? What is Russia hiding?

Working to ensure that a comprehensive and sustained ceasefire takes hold along the line of contact, and that OSCE monitors have the full and unfettered

access they need to help monitor that ceasefire, is the sina qua non for the political steps set out in the Minsk agreements. Consider the steps of passing an electoral law and holding free and fair local elections under Ukrainian law and in accordance with OSCE standards. That is of critical importance. We all recognize that. Yet, to hold a democratic election, citizens and election monitors need basic security and basic freedom of movement. Candidates must be able to express their opinions and assemble publicly without fear of violence or reprisals. Yet the climate created by the separatists in the parts of eastern Ukraine that they occupy is not a climate that looks anything like that.

In addition to de-escalating the fighting and allowing full access for international monitors throughout eastern Ukraine, Russia must engage constructively and support serious efforts to propose an election law for areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast, as well as support the steps necessary for an adequate security environment for elections in the Donbas region that meet OSCE standards. Actions such as those, as well as the release of all hostages and detained persons, will help pave the way for further implementation of the Minsk agreements, which should ultimately lead to Russia's withdrawal of all forces and equipment from Ukrainian territory and the restoration of Ukrainian control over its side of the international border.

Pulling back forces and abiding by the ceasefire is also crucial to improving the dire humanitarian situation faced by civilians, who are disproportionately bearing the costs of Russia's aggression in Ukraine. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, an estimated 3.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the ongoing conflict. Approximately 1 million of those people live along the line of contact or in separatist-controlled territory. Yet they are receiving only a fraction of the aid they need, in large part because Russian-backed separatists expelled most United Nations and international humanitarian organizations in July 2015, and have not allowed them consistent access since.

In a perverse cycle, Russia uses the dire humanitarian situation that it has helped fuel to send its so-called humanitarian convoys across the international border with Ukraine, all the while preventing Ukrainian and international authorities from inspecting those convoys. Once again, if your convoys are filled with food and medicine, why prevent international inspectors from looking inside of them. To that end, we again urge Moscow to honour its commitments in Minsk to ensure that separatists allow the immediate resumption of full humanitarian access.

As the Government of Ukraine seeks to address this Russian-manufactured crisis, it should facilitate the safe movement of civilians and commercial cargo across the contact line. It should keep checkpoints into separatist-controlled territories open, unless closing them is essential to ensuring the security of civilians. And it should find ways consistent with security and administrative requirements to ensure that social, economic and educational benefits are provided to internally displaced persons and other populations, such as older persons and persons with disabilities.

Let me turn to another part of Ukraine, Crimea. It has been more than two years since Russia held its sham referendum, one, we must recall, where the question posed to voters — those who turned out — was to join or leave Ukraine. Some choice. It has been two years since then, as well, that 100 Member States, including the United States, adopted General Assembly resolution 68/262, which underscores that the referendum has no validity and affirms our shared commitment, as stated in paragraph 1, to

> "the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders".

If you want a picture of the way Russian authorities govern on sovereign Ukrainian territory, just look at Crimea today. On Tuesday of this week, the Russian-controlled Supreme Court in Crimea declared the Mejlis, the self-governing body of the Crimean Tartars, an extremist organization. As a result, virtually all forms of Tartar political expression and organization have effectively been criminalized. No more speaking to the press — that is a crime. No more convening meetings — a crime. No more holding elections — a crime. Of course, the Mejlis will be allowed to keep its bank accounts, although now they may be used only to pay taxes and penalties to occupying authorities. On the day of the ruling, Crimea's so-called Chief Prosecutor declared,

> "Today, we build a world in which every Crimean will be safe and joyful".

That is unless one is a Crimean Tartar or another resident who happens to oppose the occupation.

Meanwhile, the crackdown on dissent in Crimea continues to deepen, as the few remaining independent journalists and other critical voices are methodically targeted. On 18 April, a high-ranking Russian justice official argued publicly for passing legislation that would treat questioning the legitimacy of sham Crimea referendum as an "extremist activity", punishable by law. The following day, the homes of at least seven journalists in Crimea were raided by authorities. One of those journalists is now facing up to five years in prison on charges of allegedly "calling for undermining Russian territorial integrity via mass media". In another words, for reporting that Crimea is part of Ukraine, as all United Nations maps show that it is, one is locked up. How is that possible? In Crimea and eastern Ukraine, as in so much of Russia, telling the truth is now an extremist activity. Go figure.

Let me conclude. I began my remarks today by encouraging us all not to lose sight of the root cause of this crisis: Russia's occupation of Crimea and ongoing arming, training and fighting alongside separatists in eastern Ukraine. Just as the root cause of this crisis has not changed, neither has the solution. As has always been the case, the crisis manufactured by Russia can and must be ended by Russia, by stopping its arming, training and fighting alongside separatists in eastern Ukraine and by ending its illegal occupation of Crimea. The Minks agreements offer the only pathway — one agreed upon by all sides — to de-escalate this conflict, to restore peace to Ukraine and to reaffirm the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that undergird all of our collective security. But to implement them, Russia and the separatists whom it supports must fulfil the very first step of abiding by an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and grant full access to OSCE monitors. Together with the Normandy format leaders, the United States will continue to press for their full implementation by all parties, just as we will keep sanctions in place for as long as Russia continues to obstruct their implementation. And we will maintain our Crimea sanctions until Russia ends its occupation of the peninsula.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this debate. I also thank, the briefers, my good friends Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik. I have had the pleasure of working with both of them here at the United Nations, where they both did excellent work. I also wish to thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for joining us in this debate.

Spain believes that the situation in eastern Ukraine continues to be extremely concerning. The information we have just heard from Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ambassador Apakan only confirm that. Consequently, we want to see the Security Council continue following up accordingly on the development of the conflict in its different aspects and use all tools at its disposal to support the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Normandy format countries, which Spain supports.

Today's information also serves to confirm that we are once again going through a troubling time. Not only is the ceasefire that was called for six months ago not being respected in a sustained and consistent manner, but in recent weeks violations have increased and the number of victims rises daily. Moreover, the other security aspects covered by the Minsk agreements that the Council endorsed in resolution 2202 (2015) are not being applied.

I wish to point out in particular our concern about the lack of progress in connection with demining activities, given the disastrous effect that that has on the civilian population. We are also concerned by the humanitarian situation and what we have heard concerning the human rights situation. In that regard, we have also very carefully read and taken note of the most recent report of the human rights Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.

With regard to the political provisions of the agreements, Spain also believes that the main obstacle to moving forward, with respect to them is the lack of stability and minimal security conditions in the Donbas region. The status quo is unsustainable, and maintaining it can lead only to a further worsening of the situation on the ground and, in particular, more suffering on the part of the of the civilian population, which should be a priority in our deliberations when we consider the conflict.

We all know that freezing conflicts does not bring us closer but, on the contrary, moves us farther away from a solution, perpetuating over time their harmful effects. Consequently, we need to redouble our efforts in supporting the Minsk process and the work of the Trilateral Contact Group within the framework of the OSCE, so that we can soon see concrete progress. The Minsk agreements are still the only valid framework

to seeking a political solution to the conflict, which has gone on for far too long. But it is not enough to simply repeat that time and time again, if they are not accompanied by a real and active commitment with regard to the obligations that they entail.

Everyone, including members of the Council, must focus their efforts on their full, immediate and — above all — good-faith implemention of the agreements. By everyone I mean not only the parties who are directly involved, but also especially all of those who have an ability to influence those parties. In that regard, I call once again on Russia in particular, in its dual capacity as member of the Normandy format and as an actor with a great capacity to influence the separatist leaders of the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. We condemn the lack of political resolve and commitment that these leaders continue to demonstrate, and in particular the difficulties they repeatedly raise for humanitarian actors, including those of the United Nations. We also condemn the constraints they continue to impose on the full mobility and privileges of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission, with occasional recourse to violence. These actions are unjustifiable and unacceptable and must end.

I cannot conclude without recalling once again the content of General Assembly resolution 68/262, which is binding on us all. Spain is firmly convinced that any lasting and sustainable solution must necessarily involve respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and for the human rights of all its inhabitants, including those of Crimea.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I should like to begin by thank the three briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun, Ambassador Apakan and my former colleague, Ambassador Martin Sajdik — for their insightful and sobering briefings.

Japan is deeply concerned by the current situation in Ukraine. The briefings we have just heard confirm our concern. Ukraine may not make headlines these days, but the situation is far from calm and stable. The number of ceasefire violations in Donetsk and Luhansk has been on an upward trend since January. During the week of 11-17 April, nearly 1,000 rounds of mortar fire were recorded — the highest number this year. In March, 20 Ukrainian soldiers were killed. This was the highest number of casualties since August 2015.

We must challenge this deadlock. The answer lies in the Minsk agreements. That document has been agreed to and signed by all the relevant parties. It was also endorsed by resolution 2202 (2015). Japan once again urges all parties to fully and promptly implement the Minsk agreements.

It is a matter of concern that the freedom of movement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission is increasingly restricted. The Special Monitoring Mission has been playing a pivotal role in helping to de-escalate the crisis. Without such restrictions, the Mission could do much more. Japan stresses that the Special Monitoring Mission must be given full and unfettered access throughout the conflict zone, including the entire border region.

Japan strongly believes that the conflict in Ukraine can be solved only by diplomatic means and in full respect for international law, especially the legal obligation to respect Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

In closing, I wish to confirm that Japan, as Chair of the Group of Seven Ukraine Support Group and as one of the largest donors to Ukraine, remains committed to supporting Ukraine's efforts for reform.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I should like to begin by thanking Ukraine for calling for this debate and to welcome the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs to our meeting. I also want to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik for their briefings.

In February 2015, the Council endorsed the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which laid out a number of agreed steps aimed at ending hostilities, alleviating humanitarian suffering and establishing a path towards resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Yet more than a year later, none of these measures has been implemented fully. Even the first and most basic of the agreed measures — an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire — is routinely violated. Worryingly, these violations have increased in intensity in recent weeks. The second agreed measure — the withdrawal of heavy weapons — has also not been fully implemented. Recent reports of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) highlight the use of artillery, mortars and tanks, all of which were supposed to have been pulled back from the contact line over year ago.

The situation is deeply troubling. Given the abundance of arms in the separatist-controlled regions, there is a real risk of further violent escalation. The persistent violence has caused the deaths of thousands of people, with tens of thousands more injured. Essential civilian infrastructure has been damaged and cannot be repaired amidst flying bullets and falling shells. More than 1.5 million people are internally displaced.

Beyond the terrible human costs, the failure to stabilize the security situation has also made progressing other aspects of the Minsk agreements much more difficult. We call on the parties to honour their commitments and implement all aspects of the Minsk agreements. This is the best path towards a stable and lasting peace. As a matter of priority, all parties must deliver on their commitment to a genuine ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, monitored and verified by the OSCE. We reiterate our call on Russia to use its influence over the separatists to ensure that they implement commitments made in Minsk.

The OSCE has a critical role to play in verifying implementation. It is therefore of real concern that OSCE monitors continue to face significant constraints on access and movement in areas under separatist control, including along most of the Ukrainian border that remains under separatist control. Again, we urge Russia to use its influence over the separatists to ensure that OSCE monitors can effectively and safely fulfil their responsibilities under the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We condemn recent aggressive acts against OSCE monitors in separatist-controlled areas, including being fired upon and threatened at gunpoint. Such actions must be repudiated by all sides.

On the political aspects of the Minsk agreements, we need to see faster progress. Reaching agreement on modalities for elections — which are to be held in accordance with relevant OSCE standards, monitored by the OSCE and in a secure, stable environment — is a priority. Discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group and Normandy format need to be approached in good faith and with a determined focus on problem-solving. We hope that practical steps can be agreed in order to break the current impasse.

We must not lose sight of the ongoing suffering of the civilians caught up in this conflict and its aftermath. The humanitarian challenges flowing from the crisis in Ukraine continue to affect the lives of millions. Huge numbers of Ukrainians face daily challenges accessing basic necessities, including food and water. All sides need to intensify their efforts to ensure that support reaches civilians in affected areas and those that have been displaced by the violence. Ultimately, however, the lives of civilians will be best protected through full implementation of the Minsk Agreements and the restoration of peace.

Lastly, let me reiterate New Zealand's rejection of Russia's annexation of Crimea, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Organization.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I join my other colleagues in expressing our appreciation to the briefers for their comprehensive assessments of the latest situation in Ukraine. My delegation acknowledges the presence of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine at today's meeting.

Over one year after the signing of the Minsk II agreement and its endorsement by the Council via resolution 2202 (2015), we need to examine how much progress had been made in its implementation. Listening to the briefers, it is obvious that much more need to be done.

Malaysia is deeply concerned by the daily violations of the ceasefire. The recent escalation in violence in eastern Ukraine and the missing weapons from the storage sites detected by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission are alarming signs, and we hope do not indicate for the direction in which we are heading. While we welcome the progress made to date in implementing the Minsk agreements, such as the exchange of prisoners and on constitutional reform, we wish to see more efforts towards the holding of local elections in Donetsk and Luhansk, in accordance with the laws of Ukraine, the reinstatement of full border control by Ukraine and the withdrawal of all foreign military personnel, mercenaries and military equipment from Ukraine's territory.

We reiterate our call on the parties to cooperate fully with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine to enable its personnel to carry out their mandate, including by providing full and unhindered access to the OSCE to rebels-held areas in the Donbas region and the requisite information to enable the OSCE to verify the withdrawal of heavy weapons. Any threats to the security and safety of the OSCE personnel and

obstructions that prevent them from fulfilling their mandate are unacceptable. The recent capture of a United Nations staff member by the separatists is a cause of great concern, and we urge his immediate and safe release.

On the humanitarian situation, we remind the parties to honour their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, particularly on the protection of civilians. Malaysia urges all parties to allow safe and unrestricted humanitarian access to those in need. We reiterate our position that humanitarian assistance must be carried out, in accordance with international law, international humanitarian law and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We reiterate the need for a peaceful political solution to the conflict, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We commend the hard work of the OSCE and the Trilateral Contact Group in Ukraine, and we urge the relevant parties to intensify cooperation through those frameworks in good faith.

In conclusion, we urgently need to break the current deadlock and to halt the downward spiral in implementing the Minsk agreements. Every effort must be made to uphold and stabilize the ceasefire and build trust through confidence-building measures. Malaysia therefore urges both sides to renew their commitment, engage in good faith and redouble their efforts to fully implement the provisions of the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, as well as Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sejdik for their comprehensive briefings to the Security Council on the developments in Ukraine and on the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We would also like to welcome Mr. Vadym Prystaiko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Egypt has always stressed the need to intensify international efforts to reach a lasting political solution to the crisis in Ukraine, a solution that would bring security and stability in Ukraine, according to the Minsk agreements. Egypt believes that those agreements are the best framework for reaching a lasting and sustainable settlement to the conflict raging in the country.

Security Council resolution 2202 (2015) calls on all the parties to implement a package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, especially those related to the commitment to a ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the adoption of necessary constitutional reforms and the holding of local elections in Donbas. The package also calls for addressing the humanitarian implications of the conflict, in coordination with all the relevant parties without exception.

Egypt expresses its deep concern over the meagre progress on those fronts. We urge all parties to comply fully with their commitments under the Minsk agreements. We call on all parties to engage in the dialogue process and to work towards a peaceful solution that meets the aspirations of the people of the region.

As the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in Donbas, Egypt stresses the vital need of ensuring humanitarian access to all affected areas to improve the life of citizens. Egypt calls on all parties to exercise self-restraint and to implement fully the Minks agreements and the ceasefire for the benefit of the peoples of the region. Egypt will continue to support all efforts to reach a political settlement to this crisis. We commend the ongoing efforts at dialogue under the Normandy format and by other international partners to that end.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to thank the delegation of Ukraine for bringing this item to the attention of the Security Council, and also for the presence of Mr. Vadym Prystaiko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. We would also like to thank Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Ambassadors Apakan and Sejdik for their briefings.

Our country has been following with concern the recent events in eastern Ukraine, as well as the recent ceasefire violations. We regret that, two years after the conflict began, hostilities have again intensified in recent months, and we are concerned by the reports of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine with respect to the presence of heavy weapons, tanks and artillery systems on both sides of the contact line in the security zone in eastern Ukraine. In that regard,

we believe it is crucial to increase efforts and step up dialogue in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements. We understand that is the appropriate way to find a political and peaceful solution to the conflict. In that spirit, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2202 (2015). We urge the parties to comply with their obligations under the agreements and thereby achieve the objective of the ceasefire.

Similarly, Uruguay calls upon the parties to ensure the effective protection of human rights of the residents of the entire region, in particular the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. We believe that it is crucial for the parties to the conflict to respect international law and international humanitarian law in all circumstances. That is essentail in order to address the situation of internally displaced persons and persons who require humanitarian assistance, in particular in terms of protection, continuous supply of water and food, emergency supplies and other critical services. It is also crucial to guarantee access to humanitarian organizations to the affected areas, and also to guarantee the free and safe circulation of civilians through the contact line.

Uruguay recognizes the important work done by the Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE in Ukraine, and we believe that it is essential that the Mission be allowed access to all areas of the conflict zone in order to fulfil its mandate.

Lastly, my country hopes that the challenges in implementing the Minsk agreements can be overcome and that existing differences can be settled exclusively through peaceful means, through dialogue among the parties and full respect for international law and democratic values.

Mr. Toro-Carnevali (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to welcome the presence of the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, and Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has on many occasions expressed its strict adherence to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, wherein the peaceful settlement of disputes and direct dialogue between the parties are an essential component. That is why we reiterate our conviction that the full implementation of resolution 2202 (2015), in support of the decision by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany on 12 February 2015 in Minsk, is the fundamental basis for the consolidation of efforts to encourage the parties to work together towards a political and peaceful solution to the Ukrainian crisis. In that context, our country considers the ongoing work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in support of the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements to be a positive step forward and has been following the recent violent events in the Donbas region with great attention.

On 5 April 2016, the representatives of the countries of the Minsk Group of the OSCE condemned the resurgence of violence and further stated that "there is no military solution to the conflict". Also, the joint statement after the ministerial meeting of the OSCE Troika on 12 April expressed

> "deep concern at reports of increasing numbers of violations of the ceasefire and the presence of heavy weapons in the area security in eastern Ukraine".

Furthermore, they rejected the incidents involving the monitors of the Special Monitoring Mission.

Venezuela remains convinced that a military escalation and spread of the conflict should be avoided, for which the support of the international community and strict compliance with the Minsk agreements and resolutions of the Council are required. All parties should continue working to address the structural causes of the crisis, in order to achieve a firm and lasting peace. Any effort to manage the situation will succeed as long as there is dialogue and support for direct negotiations, and the parties show political will using the Minsk agreements as a guide.

Venezuela is convinced and has argued in various forums of the Organization that the application of unilateral coercive sanctions are contrary to international law. In that context, we believe that the current sanctions are counterproductive to the desire for peace and stability in the region and are eroding the climate for dialogue necessary to restoring trust between the parties.

In any conflict, civilians are the most affected by violence. We therefore call upon the parties to strictly abide by the obligations relating to their protection, including the need to ensure access for humanitarian assistance to residents, internally displaced persons and refugees in the affected areas. We reject violence,

ethnic and political persecution and acts of terrorism, regardless of who commits them. Any incident should be independently investigated, with evidence being provided to support the conclusions of such investigations.

Finally, we call on all parties to work with conviction in efforts to achieve a just and lasting political solution that is in their own interest and in that of the entire region.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, the Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, and the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-office in Ukraine, Ambassador Martin Sajdik, for their briefings. We also welcome the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to this meeting.

After a period of calm, with a ceasefire holding since the last quarter of 2015, violence has returned to the east of Ukraine, marking the end of a period of hope for better days in the country. Deaths of civilians, disappearances, violations of women's rights, displacement of people, humanitarian crises and human misery will again become realities of life in eastern Ukraine unless a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities are not reinstated in earnest.

We reiterate our support for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which were endorsed by the Security Council through resolution 2202 (2015), and for a permanent ceasefire, as the prerequisites for the speedy implementation of the Minsk agreements' package of measures and ultimately the establishment of a durable and sustainable peace in Ukraine.

We are deeply concerned by the worsening conflict in eastern Ukraine. Reports of increasing ceasefire violations, mainly in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, are matters of concern. We regret the restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement of the Special Monitoring Mission and express our total disapproval that heavy weapons previously withdrawn from the front lines are missing from the permanent storage sites and are being used by the belligerents. Also of concern is the situation of internally displaced persons as a consequence of the reported incidents, while humanitarian access is increasingly restricted and serious security incidents are being reported.

We regret constraints on humanitarian access and urge all parties to the conflict to facilitate the safe, rapid and unimpeded access by humanitarian organizations to the areas and people in need. Once again, we call for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of all heavy weapons and the full implementation of the Minsk agreement's package of measures. We furthermore call for full access for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and for monitoring and verifying compliance with the Minsk agreements and urge strict respect for international commitments agreed under international guarantees so that the people of Ukraine are allowed to live in peace, freedom and security.

Finally, we reiterate our support for the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and negotiations and strict respect for the principles of international law and the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks you, Mr. President, for organizing today's briefing. I would also like to welcome the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to the Council.

The outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine two years ago testifies to the seriousness of the issue of conflict prevention, the Security Council's responsibility for the maintenance of peace and how urgent it is that we step up its efforts in that regard. That was why my delegation welcomed the meeting the Council held in this Chamber in February (see S/PV.7635) with Mr. Franz-Walter Steinmeier, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), one of whose priorities, rightly, is the crisis in Ukraine, with the triple goal of renewing dialogue, re-establishing confidence and restoring security.

That is why my delegation, which continues to be deeply concerned about the reports of repeated violations of the ceasefire, would like to recall Senegal's commitment to promoting dialogue and international cooperation as means to help resolve disputes. In that regard, I would like to reaffirm my country's support for the Minsk agreements, signed in September 2014 and finalized in February 2015, which constitute a solid basis for reaching a sustainable and credible political solution to the situation in eastern Ukraine. It is therefore vital that the parties join their efforts, with the support of the negotiating frameworks already in place, with the aim of fostering a climate conducive to

the diplomatic solution that we all want. In that regard, we should support the efforts that have already been made to reduce tensions and promote peace, stability and security, as well as to facilitate dialogue among the authorities, civil society and ethnic and religious groups.

We hope that the various initiatives will contribute to stabilizing the ceasefire more effectively, ensuring the withdrawal of heavy weapons and solidifying a national dialogue, in accordance with the Minsk agreements and within the framework of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine. In that context, I would like to emphasize the importance of the extension by the Permanent Council of the OSCE of the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to 31 March 2017. Given the Monitoring Mission's impact on the de-escalation and withdrawal of weapons, we believe that the OSCE monitors should continue to benefit from free access to the area in order to better fulfil their role and ensure the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements, particularly the ceasefire. Bearing in mind the importance of establishing credible and legitimate institutions in the current situation, it seems equally crucial to make appropriate arrangements for the holding of local elections in accordance with the provisions of the Minsk agreements.

I would like to conclude by urging the parties to renew their commitment to dialogue and by assuring them of Senegal's full support in their efforts to reach a negotiated and sustainable political solution.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to warmly welcome our former colleagues, Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan and Mr. Martin Sajdik, who have undertaken a very difficult task and for whose efforts we are very grateful. And of course I would like to thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

The extremely grave crisis in Ukraine sparked by a coup d'état actively supported from outside the country has now lasted two and a half years. Today, astonishingly, the Permanent Representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom have attempted to tie the start of the crisis to the unification of Crimea with Russia. There is no need to distort the facts. They will not succeed in covering up their blame for the crisis. At the moment Crimea is an island of stability by comparison with Donbas in former Ukraine.

For the duration of the crisis in Ukraine, the Security Council has unfortunately been used as a platform for propaganda. The single, although very significant, achievement within the walls of this Chamber was the adoption of resolution 2202 (2015), which approved the package of measures agreed to on 12 February 2015. In adopting that resolution, the Council took on the political responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the package. That is what we must focus on. In our conversations, some of our Western colleagues have admitted that Kyiv is not implementing it. But they also say that, while President Poroshenko personally agreed to the document in Minsk, he does not have sufficient political clout to implement its provisions. We do not accept such explanations. Why did the current Ukrainian leaders seize power through a coup d'état if they were not capable of governing their country?

We will be keeping a close watch on the behaviour of the new Ukrainian Government. Mr. Yatsenyuk, who was well known for his bellicose statements, has resigned as Prime Minister. It appears that there are no serious differences between the President and the new Prime Minister and that the latter does intend to implement reforms. But it seems clear that there can be no question of reform succeeding until the bloody conflict is settled and until Ukrainian society comes together and rejects its hostile ideology of extreme nationalism.

In that context, we were interested in the Ukrainian delegation's proposal to hold this Security Council meeting today, particularly since President Poroshenko announced that this was done on his personal initiative. We need to know what the new power structure in Kyiv has to say about its intentions with regard to implementing the Minsk agreements. That is particularly the case in view of the fact that before proposing that initiative, the Kyiv authorities, as usual, consulted Washington, and an assistant to the Secretary of State visited Kyiv. In their bilateral contacts, our American partners have said that they would like to make a constructive contribution to settling the crisis in Ukraine and would even like to join the Normandy format. In practice, however, as we have seen more than once, their interactions with Kyiv have the opposite effect, leading to a radicalization of the Ukrainian authorities' positions and increasingly aggressive rhetoric on their part. Now this has happened again. With policies such as these, based on a hidden agenda, Washington is undermining trust in its actions, and, as

everyone knows, not just in Ukraine but in many other cases. The statement made today by the United States representative is yet another example of that policy. And today's statement by the representative of Ukraine was deeply disappointing, with a lot of provocative rhetoric and twisting of the facts but zero concrete plans for implementing the Minsk agreements.

The tasks facing Kyiv in implementing the package of measures are very clear. The political triad is crucial. First, it involves changing Ukraine's Constitution and enacting a permanent law on special status for Donbas. Secondly, it has to include the enactment of a law on elections in Donetsk and Luhansk in agreement with their representatives. Thirdly, it has to settle the problem of amnesty in connection with the events that have occurred in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. None of those issues has been resolved. Kyiv continues to refuse to conduct a direct dialogue with the Donbas representatives or to agree with them on the steps to be taken, as provided for in the Minsk agreement. In Kyiv they love to say that it is Russia that is not implementing the package of measures. But it is not we who have to enact all these laws, it is the Verkhovna Rada, and it is not we who have to put them into effect, it is the President of Ukraine. It is perfectly clear that they are simply looking to shift the blame for their problems and make it somebody else's headache.

We are always hearing from Kyiv that the main obstacle to solving the fundamental problems with the settlement is the instability of the ceasefire. However, if we consider it logically and carefully compare the facts of the reports of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), it becomes clear whose interests are served by constantly stirring up the situation on the contact line. It is no accident that the Ukrainian authorities are constantly putting out new ideas either about deploying peacekeeping forces or sending in police with heavy weapons. That is, after all, a very convenient way to proceed: first deliberately fan tensions, and then offer solutions that are unrelated to reality. The sole objective is to play for time and to distract attention from the non-implementation of the Minsk agreements. We are concerned about reports with regard to the worsening situation in the conflict zone in Donbas. The situation began to heat up in December 2015, particularly after Ukrainian armed forces began to occupy towns in the neutral strip. On some occasions, they even crossed the contact line as defined by the Minsk agreements. We view those acts as very dangerous and provocative.

Ukrainian forces must pull out of those towns. That assessment is supported by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. On 17 April, the representatives of the Ukrainian forces, in discussion with OSCE observers, did not hide their intention to occupy new territories in the south-east. The number of violations of the ceasefire have recently been equal to those in the heated period of the summer of 2015. On some days, there have been up to 4,000 such violations. OSCE statistics indicate that the Ukrainian side is the side that is most responsible for those violations. From 4 to 21 April, the Special Monitoring Mission noted a threefold increase in Ukrainian heavy weapons in the security zone. The most recent report states that only 9 per cent of the declared Ukrainian weapons remain in their storehouses. A significant portion of the missing weapons can be found in the forward positions of the Ukrainian forces. They have continued to use heavy weapons against Donbas towns. As a result, they are destroying houses, and civilians are suffering.

Yesterday, the Ukrainian forces, armed with 120-mm weapons, shelled the checkpoint and crossing point of Olenivka. Four civilians were killed, including a pregnant woman. Our British colleague said that he does not care who is shooting, but it matters to us. There was a meeting today of the Permanent Council of the OSCE to consider specific measures to improve the security situation. We need to have a permanent presence of OSCE observers in there, and we must get Kyiv to remove the serious constraints on their movements. We must also monitor the weapon storehouses, and, if necessary, put in surveillance cameras there and in the most dangerous sectors. We must also have "mirror" patrols, not only on all of the territory of the Donbas region, but also in the rear guard of the Ukrainian army. We must step up our efforts to ensure local ceasefires, and we need to have a Joint Control Coordination Centre whose patrols are manned by representatives of the armed forces involved. We must have direct contacts between the various sections. All those measures could seriously reduce the number of incidents.

However, it is remains clear, as has been seen in many regional crises throughout the world, that maintaining a ceasefire without resolving the political problems is impossible. Instead of promoting national reconciliation by implementing the Minsk agreements, Ukraine continues its witch hunts and efforts to prepare

for war. The latest example of that trend, instead of the needed reforms, is the decision to set up a ministry to deal with "anti-terrorist operations" in the "occupied territories". Ukraine has persisted in calling the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk separatists, despite the fact that those representatives signed the Minsk agreements and demonstrated their willingness to continue to live in a Ukrainian State. An economic blockade remains in place on Donbas. All dissidents are being called terrorists and separatists, and they are being persecuted in all kinds of ways.

The standard operating procedure for those in power in Kyiv has been torture and abuse of individuals, arbitrary detention and extrajudicial punishment, much of which has been cited by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, but the Western patrons of human rights prefer not to talk about that. The American and British Permanent Representatives have tried again today to slander our humanitarian convoys into Donbas. From the very beginning, we called upon the Ukrainian Administration to organize monitoring at the border, but Kyiv refused. They have also refused permission to international entities to carry out such inspections. Generating cheap propaganda is preferable, it would seem, to relieving the suffering of the people of Ukraine.

Today, it is not possible to forget the tragic date, 2 May 2014, when, two years ago, 48 people were burned alive in Odessa and more than 200 were injured. No one has been punished for that crime. The Council of Europe Office in Ukraine has stated that the investigation carried out by the Ukrainian authorities does not meet the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular the requirements of independence, effectiveness, thoroughness and timeliness. We call upon members of the Security Council not to forget that tragic event. It is important to establish the truth and to bring those responsible to justice.

In that context, we can only feel disgust at the recent appointment to the speakership of the Ukrainian Parliament, the Supreme Rada, of the odious person known as the "Commander of the Maidan", who, according to many witnesses, participated in the provocative shooting by snipers, both in Kyiv during the coup and in Odessa. It is not surprising that, when he assumed that post, he proposed in Parliament that they should remove the paragraph on the special status of Donbas from the draft bill on changing the Constitution. The recent meeting between him and a high-level representative from Washington, D.C., again reminds us of the mechanism behind those bloody events.

In conclusion, I should like to again stress that what is extremely important today is to implement the package of measures on the Minsk agreements, as well as the strict, consistent and full implementation of the provisions of those agreements. It is the only way forward for settling the conflict in Donbas and for resolving all related problems.

That concludes the main part of my statement. Now, if I may be allowed, I would like to make two brief comments.

As the Council is aware, we were not here to discuss the issue of Crimea. That is because that is a domestic affair of the Russian Federation. But since the issue was raised, I would like to comment. Indeed, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars was banned by Russia because of their extremist activities. In some countries, after not enough attention was paid to dealing with extremists, we can see what serious consequences that has wrought. We will not repeat that mistake. The reality is that, during recent times, there has been a new wave of movement of members of Crimean Tatars to Russian Crimea. We have seen more then 1,000 requests from Uzbekistan alone, for example, which have been accepted.

Kyiv should concern itself not about the Tatars in Crimea but about Donbas, where heavy weaponry and tanks have been attacking the civilian population, their homes, schools and hospitals. The civilian population is also under an economic blockade and their social benefits and pensions have been cut off. Kyiv on a daily basis is jeopardizing the people's rights to health and to their very lives. We note that, in recent years in Ukraine, they banned the Communist Party and many other parties. They have also suppressed civil society groups and people's access to the media. In addition, they have seized and destroyed Orthodox churches and monasteries under the Moscow Patriarch. The Parliament has a draft bill aimed at banning the activities of that Church in Ukraine, although 12,000 people are members of that Church. Such a campaign could be compared, say, to efforts in a Catholic country to ban the Catholic Church, for example, because they did not like that Church. Therefore, our Ukrainian colleagues and others who are selective human rights activists should not preach sermons to us.

Now another minor comment, if I may. Mr. Sajdik in his statement said something that seemed rather

strange to me. He said he requires an answer to the issue of Kyiv's control over its borders. But the answer to that can be found in paragraphs 9 and 11 of the Minsk agreements' package of measures, which clearly state that, after elections are held and the new Constitution is adopted, Ukraine will then regain control over its border. There are eight paragraphs that deal with what exactly should figure in the Constitution about the special status of eastern Ukraine, Donbas. The answers are there. We must work in line with the provisions of the agreements and draw up laws in consultation with the representatives of the regions concerned. The Ukrainian authorities do not want to do that, insisting on restoring what they refer to as their territorial sovereignty and control, all of which is a cause for serious concern.

I have a further point. A very important fact has been communicated to me. When I spoke about the increased presence of Ukrainian armed forces on the contact line, this is what I said: the most recent report of the Special Monitoring Mission noted that Ukrainian storehouses account for just 9 per cent of the arms stock. Most of the rest of those weapons can be found in front-line positions, which demonstrates the position of Kyiv with regard to a peaceful settlement in the Donbas.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, as well as Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik for their respective briefings.

China has been following the situation in eastern Ukraine closely, and is concerned about the recurring hostilities. We have taken note that the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group recently held multiple consultations on the implementation of the Minsk agreement. We have also noted that the ceasefire and other issues were discussed at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs in the Normandy format.

Last year, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2202 (2015), endorsing the Minsk agreement and demonstrating the Council's firm support for a political solution to the question of Ukraine. All parties must faithfully enforce the cessation of hostilities and violence and implement the Minsk agreement. They must also remain committed to seeking a comprehensive, lasting, balanced and long-term solution to the question of Ukraine through dialogue and consultation. Furthermore, that solution should address the underlying causes of the issue and should fully accommodate the legitimate rights, interests and aspirations of all regions and communities in Ukraine. It also must give equal importance to addressing all warranted concerns so as to achieve a balance of all interests. China calls on all the parties concerned to exercise restraint and to work relentlessly towards a political settlement and the realization of peace, stability and development in Ukraine in order to promote both intercommunal harmony, as well as the peaceful coexistence of Ukraine and other countries.

The international community should continue to support all diplomatic efforts towards seeking a political solution. Council discussions should contribute to the easing of tensions on the ground and the proper resolution of the question of Ukraine.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Ambassador Apakan to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Apakan: I wish to thank the Security Council for giving us this opportunity to address it.

The implementation of the Minsk agreements is important. From the security prospective, however, the first, second and the third provisions of the Minsk agreements are very much related to the ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and addendum-proscribed weapons.

We hope to re-instate the ceasefire in the coming days. We believe that will give us space to pursue disengagement, de-escalation and confidence-building measures on the contact line. It will also provide space to speed up demining efforts in priority areas. I hope that will also give us an opportunity to engage in more ceasefire mediation on the contact line. The Council's support for the ceasefire and for the security of the contact line will also pave the way for progress in other areas, in particular the humanitarian, economic and political fronts.

Thank you again, Sir, for enabling us to participate in this meeting.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Ambassador Sajdik to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Sajdik: Like Ambassador Apakan, I would like to express my gratitude for having been invited to brief the Security Council on the situation in eastern Ukraine.

I understand that there are high expectations, as well as a certain impatience with the state of affairs. There are high expectations in terms of scaling up the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and the four working groups. I will certainly pass on that message of the expectations and the feeling of impatience at the next meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group, which will take place tomorrow in Minsk.

As Ambassador Apakan said, we very much hope that at tomorrow's meeting we will be able to again establish a ceasefire on the occasion of the Orthodox Easter holiday, which falls on this weekend. The ceasefire should not be limited to that holiday, but endure, restoring the hope of the civilian population in the areas of eastern Ukraine that they will see a brighter future. I can only reiterate that I will do everything in my power to fully implement the 12 February 2015 Minsk agreement, and to ensure that the agreement works better than it has thus far.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, it seems very important to me that Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik take away from this meeting the impetus to step up the implementation of the package of measures of the February 2015 Minsk agreements.

However, I would like to talk about something slightly different. It is not fully clear to us why the Ukrainian leadership initiated today's meeting. Nothing constructive in terms of internationalmplementing the package of measures has been heard from the Ukrainian side. Now, if it was their intention to exacerbate tensions in order to launch a new military operation, we believe that such a calculation has not been justified. We have heard much here in terms of common sense and good ideas, and we hope that the Ukrainian Government will listen. They must stop the fighting and the shooting and deal with the political settlement in a serious manner.

In that regard, we have heard it said that the Minsk Agreements should be implemented; however, in the spirit of transparency, that should be put down on paper. Over 24 hours ago, we drafted a press statement for adoption by the Security Council. Every member of the Security Council should already have the document, but I would like it to be circulated here once more, as I wish to address it.

In the 24 hours since the draft was circulated, only one delegation — the Ukrainian delegation — has provided us with feedback. They said that the text was unacceptable, but did not say why. Now, I would like to have all members of the Security Council take a look at the text so that we can adopt it. Although it is very brief, it does contain two very important dimensions of the situation. The most important is, of course, the implementation of the Minsk greements. I will read out the draft press statement.

> "The members of the Security Council recalled its resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the 'Package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements', adopted and signed in Minsk on 12 February 2015, and called once again for the full implementation of the package as soon as possible."

I would like to recall that paragraph 1 in the package of measures calls for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. Much was said about that today, and many expressed concern about the situation in that regard. Such an appeal would be very appropriate at this stage.

With regard to the second paragraph, it will soon be the second anniversary of the tragic events in Odessa. As we have said, the investigation called for has not been undertaken, and in Odessa there is much tension in connection with that issue. There are statements that various measures will be taken. The so called volunteer battalions, including Azov battalion and other units which are known for their atrocities in eastern Ukraine, are being brought to the city of Odessa, and we would like the Security Council to take some action, at least, confirm the need to conduct an investigation, which would perhaps calm the situation. Accordingly, we have proposed the following second paragraph in our draft press statement:

> "The members of the Security Council also recalled the tragic events in Odessa, Ukraine, on 2 May 2014, when dozens of civilians were killed and hundreds were injured. They underlined the need to speed up the investigation, while ensuring its objectivity and impartiality, in order to bring perpetrators of this reprehensible act to justice."

We have drafted the text in such a manner that it would be impossible to protest the elements contained therein. I would therefore call on our Ukrainian colleagues to show some understanding of the current situation, which is expected of them by many people, including Mr. Apakan and Mr. Sajdik, with respect to the realization of the package of measures. How can they have any objection to the text? We fully do not understand, and we would therefore propose, in a spirit of transparency, a vote on this draft text, so that the President of the Security Council could read it to the press at the end of our meeting.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Prystaiko (Ukraine): I sincerely thank all members of the Security Council for giving me a chance to speak today. It has been a very important discussion for Ukraine, and I think that all of us agree, at least, that the Minsk agreements are the only way forward, in their entirety and complexity, starting from the ceasefire and the withdrawal of weapons and foreign troops, inter alia, to the political resolution, the changes in our Constitution and the decentralization of Ukraine. Incidentally, Ukraine has already started the process of decentralization, and the only part that is not decentralized is held by pro-Russian proxies.

With regard to the Russian representative's statement, I am sick and tired, having been in these negotiations for more than two years, of the accusations of a bloody revolt in Ukraine. The statement was full of the usual "Ds": distract, distort and deny. We have heard it all before. I have made a very serious effort to familiarize myself with all of the public statements on this subject made by the Russian representative up to now. They add up to 84 pages that are worth reading. Most of the elements are well-formulated and resemble the truth, but only if one allows oneself to forget one principal thing: who came into whose land? Who appropriated the land? Who started killing people? Who sent in additional tanks and mercenaries?

With regard to the draft press statement proposed by the Russian Federation, there is no issue with regard to the first part, because it represents, as I mentioned earlier, what all of us here believe and what our leaders have confirmed, namely, that we have to support the Normandy format and the Minsk agreements. In connection with the tragic events in Odessa, my native city and not that of the Russian representative, I believe that we have to investigate all of the events there, starting from the Russians' actions in Crimea and their support and incitement that lead to the killing of people, some of whom were burned alive, in numerous Ukrainian cities, using knives and other means that were provided by the Russians. We therefore do not believe that the draft statement represents an honest attempt on the part of the Russian representative to bring those tragic events to our attention, because Russian media have already reported on the draft statement well before we were given a chance to read it.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the United States of America has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): Rather than talk about some hidden agenda of the United States, it is our view that the Russian Federation delegation, and all delegations represented on the Security Council, should work together to re-establish the ceasefire, arrive at a peaceful de-escalation of the crisis and work out a peaceful resolution on the ground.

We have just received a draft press statement with the Russian Federation's suggestion that the Security Council should consider that draft statement on the situation in Ukraine. The United States is ready to engage in a discussion with Council members on a draft that reflects our consensus view of the situation in its entirety. Let us recall the situation. I underscore again that the current crisis in Ukraine is the result of Russia's aggression and violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Meek (United Kingdom): I wish to respond to two particular points that the representative of Russia made in connection with our earlier statement.

First, he made a reference to our comments on Crimea, which, by the way, according to the United Nations, is categorically not a part of Russia. He said that Crimea was a stable peninsula. I would just repeat the words of my country's Permanent Representative in that connection: "grant access to enable a proper assessment of the situation". That is all that we are asking for. Surely, that should be acceptable if Crimea is a stable peninsula.

Secondly, there was a gross misrepresentation of my Permanent Representative's words. Our Russian colleague said that we do not care who fired the shells. What my Permanent Representative said was, "no matter who fired the shells". As the Russian Permanent Representative, who speaks excellent English, knows, the meaning of that is not the same. We are not trying to express indifference. Far from it, the way we raised that point was intended to reinforce our view that responsibility lies on all sides and that they should all work together to try to deliver a solution.

That is what we expect from Russia. If the Russians are serious about finding a solution, no matter what levels of support they are offering to the separatists, they could do much more in order to help the rest of us to understand what is really going on in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. They could do that by agreeing to consider the Ukrainian request for a policing mission as well as how to enlarge and adequately equip the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, particularly along the border.

Finally, turning to the draft press statement, I do not believe that it is a constructive and particularly serious effort. As the Russian Permanent Representative knows full well, and as my American colleague has said, the draft statement does not cover the full picture. Support to separatists is not mentioned; Nadiya Savchenko is not mentioned; the investigation into Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 is not mentioned; and Crimea is not mentioned. We will be happy to engage on the draft, but, as my American colleague said, press statements are agreed by consensus.

The President *(spoke in Chinese)*: The representative of Spain has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Gasso Matoses (Spain) *(spoke in Spanish)*: We have read the draft press statement from the Russian Federation, and we agree with the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom. We are ready to work on a text. However, it does not seem now as though there is enough consensus in the Chamber to adopt the draft press statement as it stands. It appears that there might be agreement on the first paragraph, but not on the entire draft press statement. For Spain, at this time, the Security Council should have a constructive attitude. In any circumstances, any statement that we issue should favour a de-escalation, promote goodwill, advance negotiations — while any action taken separately could be counter productive.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of France has asked or the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): Very briefly, I just wanat to say that the draft press statement submitted to us does not seem to cover the entire subject. Therefore, I believe it would need more work before being adopted.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): A minor point, but I said accurately in Russian what my British colleague said, namely, that he does not care who did the shooting. But we do care. We continue to believe that those who kill civilians should not be left unpunished. So we care very much who did the shooting. But that is not such a substantive detail.

I am more surprised at what our Ukrainian colleague said about the events that took place on 2 May 2014 in Odessa. The more so as he said that Odessa is his native town. An event took place in his native town that shook the whole world. There were many awful events during the crisis — murders and different forms of violence — but that event was a milestone. Forty-eight people were burned to death, as could be seen on television when those who tried to save themselves jumped out of the windows and were shot. Many witnesses, including the television coverage itself, said that the attack was planned, inter alia, by the current speaker of the Verkhovna Rada.

With regard to what happened in Odessa, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, who was born in Odessa, says that that attack does not require special attention, but, as I have already said, it is possible that an awful tragedy is in the offing and may take place in Odessa on 2 May. He is also indifferent. He wants to see the event in the general context. But our Western colleagues have also only wished to address the general context. Their position is quite characteristic. It is however rather strange for France to do so, as it took part in the elaboration of the package of measures. Throughout this chain of events the only useful thing that we have done, and that we must continue to do in order to settle the conflict, is to implement the package

of measures. But some say that we cannot confirm the package of measures. Our Ukrainian colleague said that he can agree on the first paragraph, but our American and British colleagues cannot. They say that they want to play a constructive role, but if we do not refer to the "aggression", they will not support the document. There is nothing about aggression in the package of measures.

We note that the United States likes to use that term — it has one aggression after another with destructive consequences throughout the world. But no aggression is mentioned in the package of measures. They are again just trying to draw attention away from the serious political and diplomatic work. And the United States says that it wants to be constructive and help us. How can we understand that claim? It is not possible to understand that position. It was repeated again just now. The United States is not even prepared to agree with the first paragraph, which mentions the need to ensure the realization of the package of measures as soon as possible. Why? Because no reference to Crimea is made in that paragraph? Well, that is because the package of measures makes no reference to Crimea either.

It is very clear, as you said, Mr. President, that there is no consensus here. We see exposed the position of some members of the Security Council, in particular our British and the American colleagues. They ought not to claim that they want to participate in a constructive manner. France and Germany will perhaps take part in a constructive way in the implementation of the package of measures, but the others will still be engaged in their demagoguery and hide their roles in all those matters. Here we have come up against one of the main problems, as a result of which the settlement of the crisis has been delayed in the Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Prystaiko (Ukraine): I will be brief. I will not add to the attempts to impose more truths, half-truths and lies that members of the Council have been subjected to for quite a long time. If we are going into such details, I would like to bring to the Council's attention, including that of the Russian representative, that when we speak of the so-called Minsk package of measures, we seem to have forgotten about the initial Minsk agreement, which was signed almost half a year ago. Why have we forgotten about it? Because the Russian Federation all the time refers only to the Minsk agreement of 12 February. I must remind the Council that the original Minsk agreement mentions the special security area along the Ukrainian corridor monitored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. If the Russian Federation is so fearful that the Ukrainian forces will regain control over the territory of Ukraine, I must remind the representative of the Russian Federation that the idea, which was supported by everyone, was that Ukrainian territory should be returned to Ukraine. But before that, the area around the Ukrainian-Russian border should be placed under the monitoring and verification of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, thereby preventing more weapons and more mercenaries from entering our territory, a practice that we have repeatedly brought to the attention of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): With regard to border control, I just spoke about that when I was talking about Mr. Sadjik's comments. Ukraine is delaying everything with regard to control of the borders. It is very clearly written in the agreement. The representative of Ukraine has probably read it. Let me read it. It says that the restoration of full control of the borders by Ukraine should begin on the first day after local elections and be completed with a comprehensive political settlement with the implementation of article 11, which states that consultations should take place and an agreement made with the various representatives of the districts in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Ukraine has not consulted with representatives of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. Ukraine is not implementing article 11, which talks about constitutional reform and about consultations with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. This should, furthermore, be done in accordance with the note in the document, which contains eight paragraphs on what the special status of these areas of Ukraine should be.

Once again, I apologize for another comment. I'd like to see the draft statement adopted, which, as I understand it, could be acceptable to the Ukrainian delegation, but then the representative of Ukraine began talking about who started the killing, pointing a finger at Russia. Those responsible were those who sought to overthrow the regime. Around 16 February.

they started to shoot policemen, and they were the same persons as those who were throwing Molotov cocktails for several weeks before. They were the ones who began the killing. The Kyiv authorities are not investigating those situations because they want to hide the real truth behind the coup d'état. Snipers were firing against their own people and against demonstrators, which created the conditions for the political coup d'état.

With regard to a final point about the earlier Minsk agreement, many documents have existed: first, there was the agreement of 21 February 2014, which would have enabled us to avoid the entire crisis. Subsequently, a very good statement was issued with the participation of the United States of America, a four-party statement, on 17 April 2014, and it included an inclusive political dialogue, but all of that was subsequently violated. The 30 September 2014 agreement was not signed. Therefore, we came up with a package of measures. That must be respected. We hope that the appeal that was made by Mr. Apakan and Mr. Sadjik with regard to the need to respect the package of measures will be listened to. Let us not find ourselves having to deal with some new military adventures, because the situation along the line of contact gives cause for concern. It can be seen that some form of military adventurism might be under way. We must avoid such a situation.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representatiave of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Prystaiko (Ukraine): I promise, Mr. President, that this will be my last statement. The Russian representative was recalling yet another detail of our long and bloody conflict. The so-called agreements of 21 February — which he just cited — were made possible with help of the four parties. But the representative of the Russian Federation has chosen not to remember the fourth party — Russia was at the table. Although three members of the international negotiating team helped Ukraine, the opposition and the President to sign the agreement, the Russian representative was the only party who did not sign the document. Obviously, he was not happy with the agreement between the opposition and then President, Mr. Yanukovych.

In that regard, I have to remind the Council that the official medal that was produced by the Russian Federation for the so-called return of Crimea has the dates on it, starting with 20 February, which is the day before that agreement was brought to the attention of the Security Council by the representative of the Russian Federation. Therefore, the Russian Federation started — not just planned, but started — the annexation of Crimea the day before we reached the first agreement and while President Yanukovych was still in power.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Maybe we could continue this discussion in an another place. The representative of Ukraine helped me work on that agreement. We believe it is important. However, President Yanukovych gave up too much as a result of that agreement, and it seems that its provisions were weak. That is true, because he was overthrown, but the signatories of that agreement should have insisted on respect for the agreement as signed.

Perhaps the representative of Ukraine has his own interpretation, but the problem is that, if that agreement had been respected, then in 2014 Ukraine would have had a new constitution and there would not have been a conflict. But it started shooting and started to use force, and now we have seen what has happened.

Throughout this crisis, we have been repeating one word: "dialogue, dialogue, dialogue". However, Ukraine carried out anti-terrorist operations, there were terrorists, et cetera, and that is what they got.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Russian Federation has circulated the draft of a press statement. Considering the situation in the Council, I propose that after the meeting we continue to discuss the text among relevant members. If I hear no objection, it is so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.